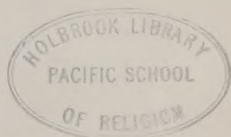


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Andover Newton Bulletin



Reformation Sunday Issue

October, 1957

ANDOVER

NEWTON

BULLETIN

Vol. XLX

October, 1957

No. 2.

Issued six times a year in the months of July, October, December, February, April and June by the Andover Newton Theological School, 210 Herrick Road, Newton Centre 59, Massachusetts. Entered as second-class matter at the post office at Boston, Massachusetts.

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OCTOBER, 1957

"History," said Thomas Carlyle, "is the essence of innumerable biographies." Although Reformation Sunday occurs in the fall of the year to commemorate the Halloween of October, 1517, on which Luther nailed his ninety-five theses to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, we in America owe as much to the makers of French as of German Protestantism, and perhaps we know less about our Reformed than our Lutheran creditors. In this issue of the BULLETIN the Editorial Committee take pleasure in publishing three delightful essays by Dr. John Brush, first delivered by our beloved colleague as lectures to audiences in Noyes Hall upon his return from Sabbatical sojourn in the place of which he writes so vividly and happily.

S. MACLEAN GILMOUR
Editor

THREE FRENCHMEN IN STRASBOURG AND LATER

PROFESSOR JOHN BRUSH

I

INSPIRING HAVEN

An underlying purpose in these three lectures is to view the rise of Protestantism in France.

We are generally more familiar with the coming of the Reformation to Germany and to England. The reasons for our relative ignorance about France in the Sixteenth Century are not far to seek. France had no Luther. The Frenchman Calvin had to do his major work outside his native land. Strong opposition and brutal repression made the French Protestants a very small minority, which they remain today.

Yet the French Reformation has deep meaning for the history of that land. Nobody doubts that the fierce Revolution of the 1790's turned the river of her history permanently in a new direction and profoundly affected the life of the Western world. Yet a brilliant historian in our century reminds us that France had two revolutions, and that they belong together. The champions of both of them, to his mind, wanted not simply to purify manners and institutions, but actually to remake the soul of France. This same historian, a Roman Catholic, goes on to say: "Like the Revolution, Protestantism is one of the greatest facts of our history."

In his recent book, "Le Protestant Français," Léonard quotes Emile Faguet: "There is nothing more French, more 'Old France,' than the Protestantism of France . . . The French Protestants are so French that they have been as the salt of France."

In these lectures we shall observe both this national and indigenous aspect of Protestant life, and also something of the international chain of influence and sympathy along which it grew. Consider, for example, how the Frenchman Lefèvre gave clear expression to the powerful doctrine of justification by faith and influenced the German seeker, Martin Luther. In time the doctrine came back over the border with Luther's powerful imprint on it to exert immense influence in France.

This leads us into our first lecture, in which we shall be more concerned with the international history. Let us take our stand in a

certain border city where the very German thing took root and shed leaves of influence to the west, and where the very French thing was encouraged. I refer to Strasbourg, where, thanks to Andover Newton, we were privileged to enjoy a few months of private study.

Over four centuries ago, three Frenchmen likewise spent a few fall and winter months in that city. For most of the substance of these lectures we shall spotlight these three men. Strasbourg on the Rhine — the "Hotellerie de la Justice," someone named it, the heaven-blessed refuge for three French Christian leaders (as for many more) in a very crucial time in French Protestant beginnings — will unify this first lecture. Strasbourg was one of those "free cities" — Basel and Mainz and Cologne were others — which maintained a loose connection with the Holy Roman Empire. The free cities paid no impost into the imperial coffers, and helped or not in the empire's wars according to their own free choice.

It was fortunate that there was such a haven, such a listening-post and balcony of watch. Despite King Francis' more or less open mind, Paris was no safe or sure center of Protestant culture or propaganda, since the metropolis' intellectual and religious life was bullied by the reactionary Sorbonne, ever on the watch for the first peeps of heresy. The Paris proletariat was excitably and fanatically anti-Lutheran.

Strasbourg is still today the metropolis of Alsace, beautiful province of villages and farms between the Rhine River and the Vosges Mountains and with sight, on clear days, of the Black Forest heights in Germany to the east. Alsace is predominantly Germanic of culture and tongue. Three centuries of the French allegiance, not forgetting the long interruption from 1870 to 1918, have not served to silence the Alsatian German chatter on the streets of Strasbourg, to say nothing of the purer German we hear in the pulpits. The French of the signboards, of the schools, of officialdom, and of most of the well-to-do, provides a cultural overlay, and we have a two-language city. Alsace prizes her link with France, yet loves her own unique heritage.

Strasbourg bears the scars, both outwardly and far in the soul, of the three Franco-German wars, two of them, to be sure, parts of World Wars. Can this bridge city play a role in the work of reconciling not only these historic enemies but also the conflicting forces within today's Europe? She boasts now the name of "The Capital of Europe," for here sits the so-called Council of Europe, a consultative representative body for the nations west of the Iron Curtain.

If today is a day of destiny for this old city, we do well to recall a period which all her historians agree to name as her most brilliant flowering time, that is, the earlier decades of the Protestant Reformation.

It is the year 1525. Walk with us along the banks of the Ill River, which winds in and about the old city before it rushes on into the Rhine. We cross a bridge and twist through the narrow, curving streets and around sharp corners. Here are the overhanging houses with their geometric, plaster-and-wood effects above the ground floor and their long, steep, tiled roofs.

1525, and a gentle old Frenchman is walking those streets. His name? For safety's sake, or so he thinks, he goes under the name of Peregrinus [Pilgrim] — ever the rather cautious and timorous man who has possibly lived too long with his books. Erasmus, the cosmopolitan scholar, would soon be twitting his Paris friend for this attempted disguise. As if France's most distinguished scholar could be hid! The butchers and bakers know him and salute him as he passes, for they are proud to have this paragon of learning, this true man of God, sojourning in their town. His name is Jacques Lefèvre. The name was a common French one, and the designation of his native village on the northwest coast was generally attached to his name: Lefèvre d'Etaples, or, in the learned Latin, Faber Stapulensis.

Not impressive to look at, this little man near seventy, bent by long study. Yet a close look reveals the years of clean, simple living, of spiritual aspiration and love for God. In our lectures we shall be flashing lights on many other men, but we shall always come back to him.

Here are two others emerging from a dark alley to meet him on the way to the cathedral to listen to the preaching of the Word. Their cordial deference to him suggests that they are his disciples, and we hear him call them by name, William Farel and Gerard Roussel. Though conversing as men with common precious memories, the tone of their voices yet betrays a certain strain in their friendship. The louder talker is Farel, who seems to have a bone to pick with his companion Roussel, who in his turn grows silent and acts a little hurt. The old master pours oil on the troubled conversation and reminds them of the gratitude they all owe God for the respite they can enjoy in the godly town of Strasbourg.

But look! Of a sudden the lofty cathedral is in view, high above us. If we are correct, this was the highest tower in Europe until, in

later times, Cologne, Ulm, and the crossing-tower of Rouen were to go higher. Built of the beautiful rosy sandstone, native to this region, it glows in the morning light. Surely here is a creation of the Middle Ages which the proud men of this new age of the Renaissance have no right to despise.

1525, and the old cathedral actually shelters evangelical worship and preaching. In 1518 a certain Matthew Zell had become the preacher in St. Lawrence Chapel in the cathedral. His Biblical expositions had drawn so many auditors that he had to move his services into the nave of the great structure. But the Grand Chapter which controlled the building refused him the use of the splendid, carved stone pulpit, which had been created for Geiler of Keyserberg. Geiler, who died in 1510, had preached Chrysostom-like against the shameful debasement of manners and morals in his time, and his name was an honored one. But Zell's note was more revolutionary and appealing because rooted in the new study of the Bible and in the gospel's promise of grace and a new heart. The magistracy, aware of Zell's popular following, but probably also measurably sympathetic to the message he uttered, ordered the corporation of carpenters to build a portable pulpit which could be moved in and out of the cathedral nave. The Grand Chapter dared not oppose. Actually, Bible study groups had for years in quiet rooms been nurturing the inevitable reform, and Luther's leaven was working with power. By 1518 the Ninety-Five Theses had been posted here and there in Strasbourg.

Wisely and firmly behind the Strasbourg reformation stood the mayor, Jacques Sturm, a layman, and not to be confused with the unrelated Jean Sturm, who came later to head the city's renowned school. To this clear-headed Jacques Sturm, more than to any other, was due the fact that Strasbourg's reform was relatively peaceful and painless, even in the radical changes carried through in the monasteries.

Matthew Zell was joined by equally capable and dedicated preachers of the Reform such as Hedio, Capito, and, most notable, the ex-Dominican Martin Bucer. Bucer was an Alsatian, educated in the well-regarded Latin school of Selestat. From scholastic theology he turned to those literary or humanistic studies of which Erasmus of Rotterdam was the crowned king. There remained ever something of Erasmian moderation in Bucer, even after Luther had lighted him with a redder flame. From his monastery in Heidelberg, he was ready and eager to ascend the Rhine to the Strasbourg of his ancestors, to join forces with Zell and the people in the gospel awakening. Released from monastic vows, a new life opened up before him. Zell encouraged

him to give Bible courses for both priests and laymen. Bucer's influence and leadership, both in Strasbourg and far beyond, continued to grow, while he shepherded St. Aurelia's Church and later the ancient St. Thomas', both of which we may visit today. The social and humanitarian content in his thought and preaching, so ably expounded for us by Dr. Henri Strohl, impresses us deeply and is reflected in the whole life of the city, especially in education. As the close friend and supporter of schoolmaster Jean Sturm, he helped to establish and support the academy, destined to expand into the university, the university which is still the city's pride and an honor to French culture. Here, later, Goethe and Napoleon were both to study, though briefly, Pasteur was to teach, and such spiritual giants as Spener and Oberlin and Schweitzer were to be graduated.

In Reformation Strasbourg, Bucer's irenic and reconciling labor is very significant, especially as we recall the city's unique and independent position. At Marburg in 1529, when Luther and Zwingli so strenuously and tragically disagreed over the Lord's Supper, it was Martin Bucer who tried to build the bridge. Later, when hopeful and patient Catholic leaders seemed still willing to work for agreement, it was to Bucer and Melancthon they looked and with whom they conferred. This spirit in Bucer would draw the respect of Lefèvre and Roussel, though William Farel and John Calvin realized earlier that no real reconciliation was feasible, not to say possible. We may recall that Bucer did an important work in England, died there, and that subsequently, under Mary Tudor, his body was exhumed and burned. Recent studies have enlarged our sense of Calvin's indebtedness to Bucer, for Calvin was in Strasbourg for three fruitful years in the 1530's as pastor of the church of French refugees.

Now we are ready to enter the cathedral with our three Frenchmen. We are lifted at once by the singing. We are instructed and uplifted by the Bible exposition delivered by Caspar Hedio. As we leave the cathedral we observe the glow on the face of Gerard Roussel. We can imagine him exclaiming: "O that we might see a day like this in Paris! I must write to our beloved Bishop Briçonnet about this."

He did write, and we have the letter. Surely it is one of the most attractive and revealing letters in Reformation source material. We quote it in full:

Almost all that I see here, to arouse and to propagate piety, the concern of the ministers of the Word to get across to the people, at almost any hour of the day, spiritual food with no Pharisaic leaven, all this would fill you with joy if you could

see it. From five o'clock in the morning there is preaching in the different temples, and common prayers are said. At seven, the same thing; at eight a sermon in the cathedral, accompanied by the singing of psalms translated into the common tongue; the singing of the women along with the men produces a ravishing effect. At four in the afternoon, again in the same temple, preaching preceded and followed by singing; by the songs before the sermon they ask the Lord to make them ready to receive the evangelical seed, and by the songs afterward they give Him thanks for having received it. Although the number of divine services seems considerable, there is not one which is not attended by a large company, hungry to hear God's Word. How happy I should be to see a like desire in my compatriots! The public teaching is not less poorly attended; it is given by men as distinguished by their piety as by their learning and who explain the original text of the two Testaments in a natural manner, simple and edifying, without a scholastic smoke. Nobody seeks to parade the riches of his own gifts; all have in view nothing but the progress of Christian piety by means of a sincere interpretation of the Word of God. They are indeed men unusually learned, and such as would be hard to equal anywhere, although to common eyes they are not great to look at, and they had no shame in making their living by the work of their hands, conforming thus to the Apostles' doctrine and not becoming a charge to their brothers. As for me, I can only admire the example of this pious devotion; it's impossible for me to imitate it, much as I'd like to.

I rejoice besides in the solicitude they have for the poor. By wise measures they insure that not a single really poor person lacks bread, at the same time avoiding the coddling of them in idleness. The magistrate devotes to this end a part of the public funds, adding to them the gifts and collections made by the citizens. In all the churches chests for such offerings are placed.

Each parish has its pastor and its deacon who, far from being paid by riches unjustly piled up from every side, are paid in part by the magistracy from public funds, the rest they earn by working with their own hands. Most of the convents have been suppressed; several have been turned into schools. However, the authorities treat the monks in such a way that they can't complain of any tyrannical oppression. Some have spontaneously left their monasteries to give themselves to honest professions; the others are permitted to remain in their cells, on the sole condition that they admit no new brothers . . . Yet there are also such

things as afflict those who are not yet advanced enough in the doctrine of the Spirit to be able to raise themselves above the exterior world and who, while carried away by faith toward regions invisible, believe they ought not to scandalize their neighbor and therefore accommodate themselves by charity to his level. Thus at Strasbourg images have been taken out of the churches. They have only left standing a single altar accessible to all, where the communion is celebrated, as in Jesus Christ's own time. Summing it up in a word, the Lord alone is adored, conformably to His Word.

This letter is highly revealing of the life of Strasbourg in the first flush of its zeal and joy in the reform, a city on fire for God and the gospel.

Our three French refugees had participated in the effort to build just such a first century Christian community in the little city of Meaux, just north of Paris. The leader was Bishop Briçonnet, a churchman of large influence at court and beyond it, and the man to whom Roussel had addressed the letter quoted above. Reform was a spice in the French atmosphere. The writings of Erasmus and Luther had penetrated circles of scholars and devout men who had felt the balmy wind of the new learning and who were giving France its cultural renaissance. The wells of ancient literature had been re-opened, and it was inevitable that men should turn to the Bible and open the Book of Books — open it hungrily and read it with fresh eyes.

The man who did more than any other to give the Bible to the French was our Jacques Lefèvre.

The early years of his prodigious scholarly career were devoted to publishing and expounding Aristotle. The real Aristotle was his aim, as over against the stuffed scarecrow of an Aristotle as he was presented in the Paris classrooms. Lefèvre's bent was mystical, and he joyfully found a fresh vein of gold to work in some of the stellar Christian mystics such as the Pseudo-Dionysius, Richard of St. Victor, Ramon Lull, and Nicholas of Cusa. Aristotle and Plato were being hurled against each other in strenuous controversy, but Lefèvre was sure they could be reconciled. Visits to Italy, and especially to Florence, had brought him to the feet of such exponents of Neoplatonism as Pico della Mirandola. But this zealous scholar, this hungry soul, could not avoid the Holy Bible, its claims and demands, its promises, its precious gifts from God. When he translated and published the systematic theology of John of Damascus (8th Century), he was

discovering his interest in the whole range of Christian thought. John of Damascus, moreover, had aimed to build his whole structure of theology on a Scriptural foundation.

About 1507 the high-born and well-favored Briçonnet offered Lefèvre a place for his devotions, his study, and his teaching, in St. Germain-des-Pres, that old Paris abbey church which lifts itself above the very quarter of the city where today existentialists and others argue and drink and write.

Though continuing his interest in the mystics, the scholar was now ready to put forth his succession of works on the Bible, beginning with his "Quincuplex Psalter" (1509), a five-columned critical edition of the Psalms. He was finding his life's dominant goal to advance the knowledge of the Bible and, if I may use a phrase common in John Wesley's vocabulary, "Scriptural holiness." His "Commentary on the Epistles of St. Paul" (1512) has been termed by Imbart de la Tour "one of those books which make an epoch and announce a revolution." Bear in mind that this was before Erasmus put forth his highly influential Greek New Testament (1516), and thus well ahead of Luther's New Testament in German (1523). The Bible professor at Wittenberg knew and used Lefèvre on the Epistles. Of chief interest to us is that the French scholar adumbrated here a belief in justification by faith, even if not brought forth with clarity and power and fullness of Luther's subsequent utterance.

Around Jacques Lefèvre were many devoted and gifted younger men. Scholarly coöperation in the French renaissance of learning and printing was an inspiring fact, and now that coöperation was turned to the service of Scriptural knowledge and spiritual renewal. Gerard Roussel and William Farel were of Lefèvre's select company.

When Briçonnet was given the bishopric of Meaux (1516), he invited Lefèvre and a few of his disciples to help him institute a reform of the diocese on the basis of Bible study and preaching. It was an eager group. Would that we had recordings of some of the conversations as guided by the practical bishop and the devout scholar! Imbart sees in the Reform cell at Meaux a prophecy of the Port Royal to come.

Roussel distinguished himself by his preaching gifts. Briçonnet gave him a parish and, at a later time, made him canon and treasurer of the cathedral. Farel, though "neither a theologian nor a priest," was given preaching assignments. One conspicuous event of the Meaux period was Lefèvre's New Testament in French, which the bishop

helped to get into his people's hands and homes, a revolutionary step in French religious history. The old scholar had not Luther's genius with his native tongue, and, furthermore, he leaned rather heavily on the Vulgate for his text. Yet we must salute his purpose and his zeal.

In the light of subsequent history, Briçonnet's reform appears a rather conservative one, since the men of Meaux as a group could harbor no intention of breaking their Catholic ties. The Roman Catholic scholars today give Meaux a relatively clean bill of orthodoxy. The wonder is, perhaps, the opposition which the adventure did excite, unless we recall that the names of Erasmus and Luther were red rags to the severely orthodox minds of the Sorbonne. All this Bible reading and Bible preaching were encouraged by the labors of the erudite Dutchman and the bold Saxon, and the gentle Lefèvre obviously bears a resemblance or relationship to these others.

"I only know one theology," he writes on the Third Epistle of John, "made of that living faith which God gives and which man cannot attain. Christ and His Word are all; who knows that, knows everything!" To us today this sounds piously orthodox, but we must ponder it more closely. If Christ and His Word are everything, then where are Church and Priests and Saints and Good Works? There really was reason for the theological faculty and the Parlement of Paris to take alarm!

Moreover, the Bible in the people's hands had fanned much popular excitement in Meaux, and the leaders were alarmed to discover that the people wanted to move faster than they. There was a rash of iconoclastic violence, a result which Briçonnet had not dreamed could happen. Elsewhere in France, moreover, especially in Lyon, the common folk were rising. In that strategic city the bold reforming preacher Maigret happened to be one of Lefèvre's own disciples!

The men of Meaux had hoped much of their bishop. But could the king's appointee really carry through a thoroughgoing church reform? William Farel had left the city, convinced that these men lacked a primitive Christian daring and would never really take the necessary steps to bring the church closer to the New Testament pattern. Lefèvre had been midwife to Farel's second birth, and here was the man who seemed to believe and act as if Christ and his Word really were everything. There was no place for Farel in France, even though we shall have to count him as a great pioneer builder of that French Reformed Church which was yet to be. As for Lefèvre and Roussel and others, however, they tempered their action and

utterance. When the heat was on, Briçonnet muted his preachers and declared himself unalterably opposed to Luther and all his works.

It was from the converts of the Meaux preachers, however, that the French Reformation had its first martyr, the monk Jean Valliere, publicly burned alive in Paris in 1523. The brilliant nobleman, Louis de Berquin, admirer of Luther and Erasmus, was arrested and was saved only by the intervention of the king. But after King Francis was defeated at Pavia in 1525 and was taken to Spain as a prisoner, the liberal power in Paris went into eclipse and terror chilled men's hearts and the city's streets. Berquin was arrested again. Erasmus' writings were condemned by the theological faculty and publicly burned.

And, to come quickly to the point, old Jacques Lefèvre, tired and fearful, took the road east — into the shadow of the high cathedral at Strasbourg.

With him were his disciples, Caroli, fiery orator, and Gerard Roussel, that other eloquent deliverer of the Word, the man whose letter to his bishop we have already quoted. In Strasbourg, as we have seen, they were heartily welcomed and sheltered, and there also they were cheered by the presence of other French refugees, chiefly William Farel, the forthright man of the mountains. We have met them on the street and in the cathedral.

Our two subsequent lectures will trace further the destinies of Lefèvre, Roussel, and Farel. We already know Lefèvre more than a little, but he will continue to draw our chief attention, particularly because of his intellectual influence. But also we are challenged to pursue the locus of his loyalty. We crave to understand the factors that made the clean-cut decision so hard for Lefèvre and Roussel and that casts a spell of tragedy over their lives. In brief, Lefèvre and Roussel were to remain in the cloudland of a not-quite Protestantism, condemned by Catholics of the French right and their apparent timidity and time-serving deplored by the vigorous builders of a thoroughgoing reform.

Our vigorous builder is, of course, Farel, colorfully described by Bainton as "a fiery red-bearded Elijah bellowing at the priests of Baal." Yes, at times he seems brash and bull-headed. But he was a builder, and no mistake. Surely, for one thing, he made history when he laid his hands menacingly on a younger Frenchman and commissioned him to establish the City of God in Geneva. That man, of course, was John Calvin.

II

THE OLD MASTER

Our spotlight will now be turned on Jacques Lefèvre, with his disciple William Farel given second place. We already know them somewhat, and we shall not apologize for a mite of repetition. Lefèvre remains to this day a rather enigmatic figure, who resists our attempts to give him a simple label. His beating heart seems Protestant, yet his lungs seem to breathe a Catholic air. The enigma is fascinating to ponder and characterizes others of that intense period, where black and white seem to be demanded to the exclusion of all grays. Farel, by contrast, was all black, or white, as you choose. But as to Lefèvre.

His early life in a little coastal town of Picardy is almost a blank to history, with 1455 an only approximate date for his birth. Educated at Paris, he meets us as a widely read scholar. He had got the deadly dry indoctrination in Aristotle from which he, with Erasmus, Luther, and many other eager scholars and reformers turned with loathing. Italy drew the young scholar for two or three trips. Italy, of course, had been giving Europe its renaissance of learning, with its stress on the return to the sources, and in Venice, Rome, and Florence he met and admired the brilliant researchers and linguists who were bringing out something like the real Plato and Aristotle from the dry bones of the medieval texts. This gave Lefèvre the spur to the first great period of his scholarly career, beginning about 1492, in which he introduced a truer Aristotle into the halls of the logic-choppers in Paris. He brought out the works of Aristotle in editions which owed much to the Italian masters' texts and to which he added significant prefaces. This achievement of Lefèvre has never, to my knowledge, been adequately studied.

In Italy he also met the reborn Plato. At Florence he listened to the impassioned discussions between the devotees of Aristotle and the lovers of Plato. The leading Florentines were for Plato, although their actual systems were far more thoroughly Neoplatonic, and the mysticism of that tradition most definitely left its lasting imprint on our man.

We must take note, at this point, of France's part in the vast all-European movement of thought and life which stemmed from Italy, that is, the Renaissance. The mention of two pioneers will get us on our way. One was the Savoyard, Guillaume Fichet. This man

installed the first printing press in his native land in 1470 and wrote a treatise on rhetoric (1471) which was very influential. Another was Robert Gaguin, monastic superior, who sought earnestly for disciplinary reform in the monasteries of France. He was also a poet and a professor of poetry, a traveler and a collector of learned documents. His work for a new spirit in the halls of learning and his concern for a more virtuous manhood as the goal of education mark him as a precursor of that Northern Renaissance which was to be far more serious-minded and religiously concerned than the Italian. The German Reuchlin, outstanding worker with the Hebrew tongue, was one who heard Gaguin lecture. Gaguin also welcomed to Paris a young Dutch scholar, till then quite unknown in France, Erasmus by name.

Italian, German, Dutch, French — here is an international freemasonry of scholars! The Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries saw the learned fellows afoot or on horse, dusting up the roads for the slow traveling between the great towns that drew them. The Italians came to Paris, for example, and attracted enthusiastic audiences of men hungering for the new learning, and in turn the men of Paris, like Lefèvre, sought out the notable Italian scholars and thinkers on their home ground. France's own Renaissance of learning and letters, of poetry and the arts, makes a bright chapter in Western intellectual history. In the early decades of this awakening, Lefèvre played a significant part.

A religious renewal of a kind was also in the making in the late Fifteenth and early Sixteenth Centuries. It was confined largely, however, to the monasteries, where discipline, sorely needed, was here and there restored with boldness and rigor, as under the leadership of the Dutch monk, Jean Standonck. The common life of men seemed hardly touched by this. Nor are we impressed by the number of editions of the Imitation of Christ and other worthy books of devotion from the Paris presses in the 1590's and 1600's.

We are on the scent of a genuine spiritual renewal when we discover France's most splendid scholars, like Lefèvre and Budé, concerned for the good life, for the Christian man, renewed at heart, as the true and imperative goal of the new learning. Contemporaneously with Lefèvre, Erasmus, whose sway over the intelligentsia of France was to grow so strong, was turning from his earlier classical interests to a vital concern for a Christian renaissance which would reform manners and morals and restore true godliness to the heart of the church. At this point both the literary-scholarly adventure and the moral-spiritual quest point to the inevitable opening of the Bible.

The mystics, as we have seen, had been weaning Lefèvre away from his almost exclusive interest in Aristotle. Mysticism, appealing to the affections, the feelings, open to intuition and vision, is a historic corrective to the over-intellectualizing of religion, to the stifling of faith and devotion by the subtleties of philosophy and logic, as by the legalism of church dogma. Lefèvre knew these diseases as they afflicted the poor drones in the classrooms of Paris, and it is no wonder he welcomed the fresh air, the spiritual oxygen of the mystics. One of them was Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa, who has in our time been enjoying a lively revival and who is named by some as the greatest mind of the 15th Century. The little scholar from Picardy never lost his love for the mystical tradition, or the imprint of it on his mind. When he moved along to a deeper study of the Bible, it was with the eyes of the mystics that he always tended to read the holy page. We may recall that Luther, too, in his agonizing struggles before the great light broke in, was consoled and uplifted by the mystics. Bernard and Fauler and Gerson had helped him toward the new birth. But it was to Luther the Bible student that God spoke the liberating word, the word that came to him chiefly through the letters of the Apostle to the Gentiles.

Lefèvre's life as a Bible student begins about 1507. In his first deliverance in this field he writes with an eloquent and almost ecstatic joy over what the Bible had come to mean to him. This first work was the "*Psalterium Quincuplex*," or Fivefold Psalter, of 1509, with five Latin versions of the Psalms printed in parallel columns. This was the kind of work Origen of Alexandria had prepared in the Third Century. Lefèvre added an exposition of each Psalm. In Psalm 6 he prays: "Grant me eternal salvation, not that I am worthy of it, not that I merit it, but because of Thy tender mercy and Thy favour alone." When we read such words we feel the breath of the dawn of the Protestant Reformation. There is extant a copy of this work of Lefèvre, with Professor Martin Luther's marginal notes written in!

We hurry on to his first really revolutionary thing, that is, his Commentary on the Epistles of Paul, issued in 1512. In Strasbourg I had in my hands a 1515 edition of this epochal work, printed by the excellent Henri Estienne at Paris. The copy has several faults and patches, but is still a beautiful book. Paul's letters, ending with Hebrews (!), are printed in two parallel columns, one the Vulgate in big letters, the other Lefèvre's own Latin version modestly printed in small type. Daringly, even if mistakenly, he refused to attribute the Vulgate to Jerome. The body of the Commentary fills big, crowded pages, and then comes a surprise, or rather, three surprises. Lefèvre

included in his volume an alleged work of Linus, Bishop of Rome, the alleged correspondence of Paul and Seneca, and an alleged Epistle to the Laodiceans. These apocryphal works deceived the very man who had so boldly (though so mistakenly) questioned the authorship of the Vulgate. But we have no right, of course, to laugh at the mistakes of critical scholarship in the early 1500's.

Nor must his critical mistakes blind us to his role as pathfinder, groping away from old stereotypes of Bible interpretation and opened for new light on the old page. Smiling at many of his interpretations, we can yet honor him for insight and courage. We can begin to understand why the Sorbonne dons were loading their guns.

Listen to Lefèvre on I Corinthians 8:8: "Let us not speak of the merit of our works, which is very little, or rather nothing, but let us celebrate the grace of God, which is everything." Here is the accent on Divine Grace which would soon cause deep rumblings in the very foundations of Christendom. Luther also knew and used this work of the French scholar, and the indebtedness, I believe, is clear. Lefèvre, we must say, was too deeply rooted in the Catholic and the mystic past to sever faith and works in Luther's later revolutionary manner. This work of Lefèvre on Paul's Epistles, sealed up in an expensive book in the learned tongue, was not going to shake France or Europe too seriously.

On the other hand, Lefèvre's remarks on corruption in the contemporary church cut deep. He could not forget the rats and the rubbish of the Rome he had observed on his pious visit to see the Pope open the Holy Door in 1500. And all about him were a generally ignorant priesthood and bishops consumed with material ambitions, while the laity was spiritually haggard for want of the true Bread of God. This man longed and prayed for a fundamental renewal of the church, and he felt that widespread Bible study, cleared of traditional scholastic methods, was the royal way to that goal.

Here we can scarcely follow in detail the work of Lefèvre throughout that momentous second decade of the century, those years which brought Erasmus' Greek New Testament and Luther's Ninety-Five Theses. He became internationally famous as he took his stand in favor of Reuchlin, the German Hebraist, under fierce attack from the Dominicans of Cologne. Ascending the French throne in 1515 was Francis I, enthusiastic patron of learning, and one who would protect the intellectuals and the reformers — up to a point.

In 1518 came Lefèvre's daring study on *The Three Marys*, in which he tore to pieces the hallowed tradition which made Magdalene, the sister of Lazarus, and the sinner of Luke 7 one and the same person.

The outcry from devout and learned traditionalists was deafening, and from the Sorbonne came a ringing condemnation. Lefèvre's place and standing would have been in great jeopardy had not the King intervened to silence the whole yelping pack. These were the years when the Parisian Abbey of St. Germain-des-Pres was Lefèvre's home and men like William Farel his younger associates.

Then came the singular adventure at Meaux, not far from Paris, of which we have already said enough for our purposes. Lefèvre held a nominal position in the little city, but he was the mentor and inspirer of the whole project. By his productions, both scholarly and popular, he rang the bell for the preaching and the Bible instruction. The aim was an inner reform, under episcopal leadership, of the church in France, with no intention whatsoever of a schism or a break. The experience of Divine Grace and an open Bible, read by all, were the door to this. Most important in Lefèvre's work at Meaux was his translation of the Gospels and Epistles into French, to which he added preaching helps for the fifty-two Sundays of the year. This was 1523. One cannot but be impressed by the solid foundations this man and his friends were constructing for radical change in the religious life of France. But even in William Briçonnet's diocese of Meaux, the Reformers met with determined opposition from the powerful Franciscan interests within the city. Though we believe the common people heard the Reformers gladly, the Meaux movement was doomed.

With the enforced absence of King Francis after his defeat at Pavia, the Sorbonne saw its chance and seized it. Bishop Briçonnet lost his nerve. Lefèvre, Caroli, and Roussel took the long road to Strasbourg, nursing their grievous disappointment, fleeing from danger and in quest of a rehabilitation of their reforming plans.

In the city by the Rhine it was a joyful reunion that Lefèvre had with his disciple William Farel. We want to know more about this man Farel, whose importance in early French and Swiss Reformation history is steeple-high. The reader may recall that one of the heroic-sized figures atop the Reformation monument in Geneva is that of Farel. Politically, too, he is one of the makers of modern Switzerland.

He came from the Dauphine, in Eastern France, of devout and well-favored stock. Our knowledge of his youth is largely a blank. At about the age of twenty, about 1509, he came up to Paris and there, as we have seen, fell under the gentle but profound influence of Jacques Lefèvre at St. Germain-des-Pres. Studying, walking, talking, praying with the older man, he absorbed the finest spirit of the new French Christian humanism. Though he took his M.A. degree in 1517, we do not cast him in the scholar's role. He was plainly built for action, and he needed a firm rock of faith for his standing ground. Not all at once, but with strong forward steps, he moved away from his ardent traditional devotions toward the great deliverance which was his understanding and experience of salvation by faith and grace.

Hear these words of his about his teacher, for they furnish insight into both men:

God, of his grace, in great patience caused me to find a man who surpassed all others, for never have I seen one who sang the Mass with greater reverence than he . . . He paid the most tremendous reverence to images of all the men I've known; staying long on his knees he prayed and said his hours before them, with myself keeping company with him, overjoyed to have access to such a man, who, though such a servant of the pope that he believed detestable things in the papal religion, like mass and the whole papistical idolatry . . . nevertheless he often said to me that God would renew the world and that I would see it.

Lefèvre had held the younger man by the hand when he uttered this striking prophecy. In Farel's language we meet the Protestant warrior in full panoply. He had taken from his admired teacher what he wanted and passed along to an unequivocal position on the evangelical side. Lefèvre's own sense of the centrality of faith and the authority of Scripture became Farel's in stronger measure. "By his word," wrote Farel, "he drew me away from the false notion of merit and taught me that all comes from grace by God's mercy alone, without any of our merits . . . and I believed this as soon as he had said it to me."

By 1521 Farel had discarded belief in the merit of works, the invocation and worship (culte) of saints, the sacrifice of the mass, and the authority of the papacy. (*See Imbart, op. cit.*, p. 109, and MacVicar, *Farel*, Union Seminary Thesis, p. 45.) In Farel's own language there is a burning adjective before each of the above phrases. There were no shades of gray in this man from the mountains. Of very devout parentage, he had followed his inherited faith with all earnestness.

He had followed his teacher in devouring the lives of the saints. "And thus I persevere," he wrote, "having my pantheon in my heart, so much so that I could be taken for a papal register, a very martyrology myself." Lefèvre moved gently away from his own preoccupation with the saints to study his Bible and to center on Jesus, but Farel moved with decision and with power. We may be shocked by some of his words and deeds, but we shall never doubt where lay his heart and his loyalty.

The Meaux experiment in reform was altogether too timid for Farel. Imbart himself admits that the weakness of Lefèvre and Briçonnet was that, to spirits asking direction, the answer was a "mystique." Meaux might hold an élite for a time; he could excite, for example, the king's devout sister Marguerite; but he could not hold and lead the plain folk after he had awakened them. Martin Luther, during the period of the Meaux years, was disavowing the halfway measures and convictions of the Lefèvre to whom he had owed much, and Farel had qualities in common with the great Saxon. Lefèvre, even though his work was damned by the Sorbonne, himself corresponding with evangelicals in Switzerland and ready to turn to Bible-loving Strasbourg when the heat was on, could never seem to move beyond his difficult middle ground. His position remains a somewhat enigmatic one in the history of French Protestantism.

In his native East, Farel pressed his vigorous evangelism, and his bold tactics won him the strong enemies he ever continued to make. Imagine him for example, in Montbeliard, breaking rudely into a priestly procession, seizing the sacred host and pitching it into the river. The marvel is that he was not torn limb from limb.

In 1524 Farel was in Basel, which has been glowingly characterized for him by a friend: "The port of salvation, the asylum, the truly royal city, since there the King of Kings can have his gospel published, read, and lived." There was indeed a breadth of mind in this upper Rhine city, which shared many similar honors in the early days of the Reformation with Strasbourg. Witness the presence there of Erasmus, who wanted church reform but could not abide the thought of breaking the traditional unity of the church. There was a French colony in Basel, and Farel addressed himself to it. Neither Erasmus nor any other mortal overawed this man, and in the course of a sermon he dared to refer to the brilliant Dutchman as "Balaam." Heated interchanges ensued, with the famous scholar calling the French preacher a name we need not stoop to repeat. To Farel, Erasmus was one of the halfway men, and one he felt had never

discovered grace, even in the measure in which Lefèvre had. But this tiff ended Farel's acceptability in Basel, and the Town Council ordered him out. At his next port of call he was also put out.

At Strasbourg Farel became the virtual pastor of the French refugees. We are back where we started, at 1525 in the city of Sturm and Zell and Bucer. It was the year that brought the refugees from Meaux into Strasbourg, among them Farel's beloved father-in-God, Jacques Lefèvre, and their mutual friend and colleague, Gerard Roussel. We must now focus on Roussel, the old teacher's most loyal disciple, one whose views and actions would continue to parallel closely those of his master.

Roussel, native of the Amiens region of Picardy, was one of the learned circle about Lefèvre in the days when Noel Béda of the Sorbonne was leading the fiery campaign against the new learning and all hints of the Lutheran heresy. In 1521 Roussel published an edition of Boethius' *Arithmetic*, with a commentary in which he expounded a mystical theory of the meaning of numbers.

Roussel's religious concern and his closeness to Lefèvre made him an important man in the Meaux reform. He had particular gifts as a preacher.

The time seemed propitious for the message of an eloquent preacher who could popularize Lefèvre's faith. Francis Lambert of Avignon, gifted convert to the evangelical way, was writing his enthusiastic letter to the Elector of Saxony about the unusual receptivity of all France to the gospel's offer of grace. There continued to be the hope that the King himself might embrace the reformed faith, since he had definitely encouraged the revival of learning, that well used door into Bible study and evangelical commitment. The King's adored sister Marguerite was herself a gifted author of the new school, a powerful patroness of the poets and the scholars, and, as well, a deeply religious person who informed herself on the mind of Luther, as of Lefèvre. Marguerite was "big sister" to the Meaux reformers, and her letters to Briçonnet were read aloud and discussed in the circle of the leaders.

Whatever the inclinations of Francis and this royal lady, the Sorbonne was tenacious and powerful, with the results we know. Briçonnet's reforming venture folded up before the storm, and the bishop, making a sudden show of orthodoxy, convoked a synod to condemn Luther's teachings. Yet Roussel continued to preach all over north central France his forthright reforming word, with Lefèvre's

own accent on the authority of the Bible and the priority of free grace. William Farel was writing him encouraging letters.

Both Farel and Oecolampadius, the leading Basel reformer, were urging Roussel to challenge the Sorbonne theologians to public debate. In the latter's reply to his friends we can see further into his mind and temperament. Roussel confesses his utter inability to confront the Sorbonne tigers. Moreover, he resists the other men's request that he publish certain works in French to spread gospel truth. "Right now," wrote Roussel, "I see no means of arriving at our goal, unless the Holy Spirit enflame our hearts and inspire in us the constancy which fails us and which is necessary to us if we are to brave persecutions, tortures, and death!"

Weak and lame we may call this plaintive confession, but at least Roussel is candid. Now he, in his turn, wrote Farel very urgent appeals to come to France and lend a hand there in the reform. Why the bold William did not come may tempt us to point the finger of scorn in his direction, but doubtless he felt sure of the leading that brought him to French speaking Switzerland, where he was to find his lifetime mission, and a great one.

Despite strong convictions in matters of faith, these men, Roussel and Lefèvre, seem like halfway men to us. They were clearly convinced of the need of church reform from top to bottom, yet they sincerely shrank from being responsibly involved in schism, the "rending of the seamless robe of Christ." We are observing now two men of mystical tendencies, who can treat externals, like organization and ceremonial, as relatively indifferent things, things to be endured until the Spirit of God shall change them. Lefèvre deplores the carelessness and the superstition with which the Mass and other rituals were celebrated and gave attention to instructing priests and people on the true meaning of the ceremonies. The results were paltry. But the meditative man, touched by a mystical quietism, can still follow the Mass as he turns his eyes to heaven and waits for the Spirit to bring the reform. Farel confronts the situation and acts; for him, apparently, the Spirit is always willing and the flesh is strong.

More and more were the advancing 1520's going to press men to take a stand, clear-cut, unequivocal. Beyond the inspiring haven of Strasbourg and their sojourn there in 1525, our three Frenchmen were due for fierce years of testing.

Let us revive our memories of that important year 1525 across the face of Europe, especially east of France. Of special interest to us is

the pen debate between Erasmus and Luther, the titan of Christian learning and moral reform versus the colorful champion of a radically renewed church. Erasmus, prodded by the Pope and other Roman Catholic leaders, consented to abandon his sly neutralism with a clear-cut pronouncement of his anti-Lutheran and pro-Catholic position. In 1524 he issued his defence of the freedom of the will. Luther answered in the following year with a strong statement of his own contrary viewpoint. It has been remarked that this interchange may best signalize the decisive break between Christian Humanism, with its ideals of education and moderation, and the Reform, which now inevitably entails schism in Western Christendom.

1525 saw the final flaming up of the Peasants' War in the German lands. It was not an accident that the peasants should have risen with such fervor and power at this time to demand the redress of their long standing and largely righteous grievances. Although Luther and the more responsible Reformers had not wittingly encouraged such action, it is easy to see that the Reform was such a ferment as would inevitably break out in a variety of social manifestations.

The French men of state and church took due notice. So this is the kind of bloody anarchy that accompanies the Evangelical Reform! In an absolute monarchy like France, with its "one king, one law, one faith," such an affirmation of popular and human rights could not be tolerated. The Christian Humanism of Renaissance France, as Renaudet and Imbart de la Tour have stated the case for it, was an aristocratic movement, and the common people were dirt.

The only ultimate refuge for the old scholar, Lefèvre, and the eloquent preacher, Roussel, was in the shadow of the king's sister, Marguerite. We shall certainly want to take a good look at her in our final lecture. We shall follow our three Frenchmen on to their ends, not without introducing John Calvin, that stern but regal figure who stands above all others as the builder, not only of French Protestantism, but of Reformed and Presbyterian world Protestantism — and more.



III

TAKING SIDES

In our third and final lecture we shall tarry for a short time in Strasbourg and then follow briefly the subsequent careers of our three principal characters, Lefèvre the master and his two so dissimilar disciples. We shall find ourselves deeper in the French Reformation and hope to understand more clearly some of the reasons for its tragic development. Following Farel we shall end our journey in French Switzerland, the source of so much direction and power for French Protestantism.

It was at a highly creative moment that our three Frenchmen were in Strasbourg. A brilliant company of scholar-preachers was translating and expounding the Scriptures for a soul-hungry people. Into this creative labor the French refugees entered. There was Francois Lambert of Avignon, ex-Franciscan friar, who later, for reasons we need not explain here, found his chief field of labor in Germany. In 1524, at Strasbourg, Lambert had published his commentary on the Song of Songs and a defence of "holy marriage as contrasted with the hellish wickedness of clerical celibacy." Both of these he dedicated to King Francis. Many Reformers, including the German speaking Zwingli of Zürich, were dedicating their works to the French king, their hopes of winning Francis to the Reform being pathetically high. Had not the king rescued the learned and earnest Berquin, disciple of Luther and Erasmus, from the mad dogs of the Sorbonne? And did not the king's adored sister Marguerite hover on the very doorsill of evangelical faith?

This remarkable lady was in Spain working for her brother's release from captivity, but she had not forgotten the Reformers. She had even sent them money from Spain. The Strasbourg preacher Capito, whose hospitable home was sheltering some of the French refugees, was so touched by this act that he dedicated his new book to the princess. Gained to the Reform in Strasbourg was Count Sigismund of Hohenlohe, dean of the Great Chapter there, to whose graces Marguerite commended her French Reformers. To the Count himself, Lambert dedicated a book. Marguerite's letter to the Count began an interesting correspondence between the two, and it seems that Hohenlohe was eager to help along the gospel cause in France.

Heartening as life was in Strasbourg, our three Frenchmen longed to be back and to advance the work of the Reform on their

native soil. But when two of them ventured only as far as Metz in Lorraine and were promptly chased out, the others hesitated.

When Marguerite returned from Spain, she wrote to her French friends in Strasbourg urging them to return and assuring them of her protection. Lefèvre and Roussel did turn west. After all, Francis and Charles V had come to terms, and, once back in Paris, the king would put the heresy hunters in their place again and end the terror that had darkened the sky when the monarch was away. The returned monarch, however, was a poor risk for their hopes. Though he was indeed a lover of books and learning, he yet maintained a royal court so corrupt that even Henry VIII despised it. "L'homme-vent," the man of wind, he was named by the historian Michelet. Francis could hold to no clear policy.

Yet the Reformers did return, Lefèvre and, probably traveling with him, Roussel, going by way of Basel for a meeting with Erasmus. Lefèvre was put by the king in charge of the library at the royal castle at Blois and also appointed a preceptor to the five year old Prince Charles. Though the old scholar seemed to be out of the way, with such peaceful tasks to perform, Noel Bèda renewed the old attack, and the motherly Marguerite felt that she had to get Lefèvre under her wings for good. We shall return to observe his final years after we have looked more intimately at this remarkable lady, named the Queen of Navarre after her marriage in 1527.

There is nobody quite like her in all the annals of royalty. Let me borrow the characterization of her by the late Lucien Febvre (*Le Probleme de l'Incroyance*, p. 4):

The Marguerite of Marguerites; the Christian who wrote "The Mirror of the Sinful Soul"; the worldling who wrote the tales of the "Heptameron"; the mystic of the letters to Briçonnet; the Lutheran who turned into French verse Martin Luther's commentary on the Lord's Prayer; the Calvinist who upheld in his early days the future author of "The Institutes"; the wit [spirituelle] who protected Pocques and Quentin [two pagan poets] against the fury of the Picard who became a Geneva man [i.e. Calvin]; the woman who thirsted [l'assoiffée] for divine love.

Each phase seems to call for amplification. Nevertheless we get from Febvre a sense of her breadth and depth, her aspiration and magnanimity, and we detect that here was a brilliant child of Renaissance and Reformation who never quite, for various and possibly obvious reasons, came over to an unequivocal avowal of the evangelical position. If we understand Marguerite, we can more

adequately comprehend the destinies of Lefèvre and Roussel. All three of them were close to the center of faith and Scripture which Luther had so decisively constructed, but they were held back from actual commitment by the quietist mystic's indifference to formulae and forms, as also by the irenicist's urge to hold a middle ground in the religious turmoil. Erasmus, not a mystically inclined man, stood his own middle ground. It should be clear that Erasmus, more of a moralist and rationalist, never shared the Lutheran depths on sin and justification with these three Frenchmen.

As wife of the King of Navarre, Marguerite exercised a wide range of power and influence. She used her privileges with imagination and courage. French Protestantism cannot forget its debt to this royal woman who encouraged and protected every budding Reformer and progressive spirit who needed her. Her daughter was Jeanne d'Albret, who in her own generation became an outright Protestant and one of the moral heroines of that cause, and Jeanne's son was none other than Henry of Navarre, warrior of the white feather, amorous adventurer, decidedly a politician (or *politique*, if you choose), yet the king who at least assured Protestants the right to breathe on French soil.

The enemies of old Jacques Lefèvre, as we have seen, would not even leave him alone in his library at Blois. Marguerite now brought the venerable scholar to her castle in Nérac, in Gascony, in the very southwest of France. Bible translation was the major work of his declining years, although he did not neglect his Aristotelian studies. The Sorbonne theologians and the Parlement could not forget or forgive the one Frenchman above all the others who had kindled the fires of Reform. To these men, "the translation of a book of Holy Scripture . . . is of perilous consequence and is a thing that should not be tolerated or allowed in this very Christian realm." Yet Lefèvre kept at work, and from Antwerp in 1530 was issued Lefèvre's whole Bible in French, the version upon which five years later Olivétan's widely used French Bible was based.

Why should we not give some credence to the somewhat second-hand report that Lefèvre's declining days were streaked with painful regrets and misgivings? Less protected men of lower station were being burned for the faith which he in a measure had helped them to find. In 1523 the wool carder and lay preacher of Meaux, Jean Leclerc, was brutally tortured in that city and, after having fled to Metz in Lorraine, suffered a hideous death for his convictions. France's most famous early martyr of the Reform was the nobleman Louis de Berquin, whom we have often mentioned for the troubles he suffered and the

deliverances effected by the king. Perhaps this man was never a fullfledged evangelical, but he was a man whose tastes and views, influenced by both Erasmus and Luther, were not far from those of Lefèvre himself. In 1528 this admirable man paid the full price. Queen Marguerite's favored guest had time to meditate on this mournful history.

How shall I, who have taught the purity of the gospel, be able to stand at God's tribunal [de Berquin is reported to have asked]? Thousands have suffered and died for the defence of the truth in which I have instructed them; and I, unfaithful shepherd that I am, after attaining so advanced an age, when I ought to love nothing less than I do life — nay, rather, when I ought to desire death — have basely avoided the martyr's crown and have betrayed the cause of my God.

The scene was at Marguerite's table. The queen and others listened to his lament and followed him out of the room to console him. The old man had counseled and practiced the dying to self, almost the self-annihilation, of the quietistic mystics. But Leclerc, converted through reading Lefèvre's translation of the Gospels, and de Berquin, and many another who had staked his life on the sole justifying grace of God in Christ, had most literally and courageously surrendered life itself.

On Lefèvre's tombstone was cut his dying testament: "I leave my body to the earth, my soul to God, and all my goods to the poor." His fine library he willed to Gerard Roussel, "whose spirit had the most conformity to his own." The year of his death was 1536, the very year of the passage to death in Basel of Erasmus, with whom he had fraternized and had quarreled and yet with whose name, different as it was, his own was ever to be closely related in French intellectual and religious history. Later we shall return to that year 1536 as a kind of counterpoint to our emphasis on the year 1525.

And now as to Gerard Roussel. Upon his return from Strasbourg, this man was reluctant to hide away in the south under Marguerite's wings. We should guess from his eloquent letter about the progress of the gospel in Strasbourg that he was burning to proclaim such a gospel in the heart of France. The royal protection he enjoyed, however, quite naturally aroused jealousies of him, and there were, as we know, powerful elements who resented his gospel. Yet it seemed on the surface an auspicious moment for the Reformers to strike their anvil. Roussel's colleague Toussaint, who had spent a month at Blois, believed that the royal family was very open to the gospel. "Pray the Lord," he cried, "to raise up in France preachers

alive with the spirit of power and not of fear," and obviously he had Roussel and Farel in mind. Roussel wanted bold William to come back to France, and bold William even requested his friend to get the help and favor of Marguerite toward this end. The queen of Navarre, however, did not want a firebrand like Farel around. Gerard, however, did find two noblemen who were ready to stand behind Farel's possible return, and even to promise him a printing press. At this point the hour had passed. Farel had thrown himself with his characteristic ardor into what was to prove his true and constructive life mission, the evangelization of Roman Switzerland.

Yes, the auspicious moment, if that is what it really was, had passed. Toussaint, whom we have just quoted, was imprisoned by the Sorbonne. Strong adverse winds blew Roussel closer to the shadow of the protection of Marguerite, and Marguerite and her preachers were growing more cautious. About the nation there were burnings of heretics. The King continued to blow hot and cold. In one phase of his international politics he needed help so sorely that he reached for the support of the German Protestant princes. He proved his devotion to progressive and humanist education by establishing the Royal College at Paris (1530) and filling its faculty with notable scholars, many of whom were fairly sympathetic to evangelical church reform. Printers like Robert Estienne, who published a Latin Bible in 1532, had the King's approval. Yet, when he sensed the presence of Protestant radicalism, as in the mutilation of the sacred statues (1528 and 1530), he raged and ordered the big fires lighted. The posting of the placards (1534) attacking the Mass and the cult of the saints stirred his strongest wrath. Hundreds of suspected Lutherans (it would be perhaps just as fair to name them "Fabrists," after Lefèvre) were burned, and many others had their tongues cut out. Inconoclastic excesses perpetrated by unknown men, immeasurably harmed the cause of Reform.

Yet the very year before the placard affair (1533), Gerard Roussel had preached the Lenten course at the royal palace in Paris, the Louvre, with Marguerite and her husband and some four or five thousand auditors in attendance. When the Sorbonne raised a howl, the King of Navarre effected the house arrest of its leaders. Yet Noel Bédard managed to break his house arrest long enough to ride his donkey around Paris, exciting the ever fickle Paris mob to anger against the heretics. Though King Francis exiled Bédard and some of his associates thirty leagues from Paris, the Paris mob was able to hinder Roussel by main force from mounting the pulpit at Notre Dame, and the theologians were able to arrest Roussel for heresy.

Our preacher's days in Paris were clearly over. After accompanying Marguerite on a journey to Normandy, he followed her back to her own realm in the southwest, whence he never returned. He was her dutiful and devoted chaplain. In the year of Lefèvre's death, Marguerite effected her chaplain's appointment to the bishopric of Oléron, in her territories. The almost Protestant became a Catholic bishop! At Marguerite's court he had mingled evangelical preaching with the traditional Catholic ceremonies, and so it continued in his career as bishop.

Our narrative demands the introduction of a new but familiar figure. He is John Calvin from Picardy. A gifted young student of law, letters, and theology, he had been touched by the reforming spirit in Paris and had heard Roussel's eloquent presentation of the gospel. On November first of 1533 the new rector of the university, Nicholas Cop, gave an inaugural address which rang with echoes of Erasmus and Luther. H. O. Taylor names it "The fateful manifesto of the Reform." The rage of the Sorbonne doctors was roused again, and Cop had to flee the city. So did his young friend Calvin, who may have at least partly ghostwritten the address. In the course of his wanderings under an assumed name, Calvin quite naturally turned up at Nérac (April 1, 1534) to enjoy the Queen's protection, as well as the counsel and inspiration of the aged Lefèvre and the renewal of his friendship with Gerard Roussel. John McNeill believes that Calvin's definite conversion to the evangelical cause, about which the Reformer never wrote more than one brief sentence, took place here. Lefèvre prophesied a great lifework for the young scholar. I hold with Professor Wendel of Strasbourg that the influence of Lefèvre upon Calvin was negligible. Even so, the visit at Nérac was not without significance.

Calvin soon proved the truth of the venerable French scholar's prophecy about him. In Basel, still under an assumed name, he published in Latin the first edition of Protestantism's mightiest theological structure. The preface of the *Institutes* is the justly celebrated address to King Francis. The volume met with quick success, and a second Latin edition was printed at Strasbourg. Yet Calvin's way was still perilous, or perhaps we should say, more perilous. Further wanderings brought him to Ferrara, Italy, and the sympathetic shelter of the Duchess Renée, daughter of a former French king.

A few short years of flight and danger, of work and thought, had brought the young Frenchman of letters toward an unshakable

strength of conviction. We are ready to hear him scolding the new Bishop of Oléron, his friend Roussel:

The trumpet sounds. You should be on guard. To arms, pastor. What are you waiting for? What are you dreaming of? Is it time to sleep? Unhappy one, you ought to render account of the death of so many men before the Lord! So many times are you guilty of homicide! So many times guilty of blood, of which there's not a drop which the Lord won't ask an account of you. O Rome, Rome, how dost thou corrupt noble minds!

McNeill tells us that Calvin was later to regard more favorably his one time friend turned prelate.

We return to finish the tale of Gerard Roussel. This bishop's labors were those of a faithful shepherd of his flock, a lover and educator of the young, an earnest and weariless preacher of the unmerited grace of God. His own catechetical production, *Familiar Exposition of the Creed, of the Commandments, and of the Lord's Prayer*, fell into the Sorbonne's hands, and those reverend doctors, true to form, called it "pernicious for the Christian people, because filled with propositions not only false, captious, scandalous, tempting the reader into error and contrary to the true sense of Scriptures, but also smelling of heresy and in part manifestly heretical." His biographer assesses the evangelical elements in the work, noting, for example, two sacraments only and the serving of communion in two kinds. Did Roussel repent at last of having so long said Mass contrary to his convictions? A secondhand report says so.

In 1555, before he heard of the Sorbonne's bitter attack on him, Roussel went to his tragic death. Sharp hostility to his views in one of his parishes had reached a climax. He mounted the pulpit to express his convictions. As he stepped into it, it went crashing to the floor, his own body with it. It had been rigged for this event by an implacable enemy, a designing fanatic who wanted the bishopric for his own son and whose evil stratagem actually succeeded. (Did France need a church reform?) Roussel was carried out half-dead and died on his way home.

Let his biographer of 1845, Schmidt, on whom we have leaned rather heavily, say the last word:

Roussel was of the number of those Reformers who believed that they could be satisfied to correct some abuses, without putting the axe at the very root of the tree. The Catholic Church refused constantly to listen to these men. (P. 466.)

We turn abruptly to his old friend Farel to see the man who did

lay the axe — and a sharp one it was — at the root of the tree. I am sure we may use of Farel the words Erasmus spoke of Luther and which Melancthon quoted in Luther's funeral oration: "Because of the magnitude of the disorders God gave this age a violent physician."

We have followed him so far to see the man of action, the agitator, and the radical on the thorny issue of the Lord's Supper, as he embraced the Zwinglian point of view. The French Protestants, in their evolution of church form and practice and in their general bearing, patterned themselves after the Swiss model rather than after the German Lutheran. Farel first, and then Farel and Calvin, and then Farel, Calvin, and Beza: Frenchmen all, but Frenchmen who performed their major missions in French speaking Switzerland. Here are the real builders of French Protestantism. And Farel is the pioneer, if we can be content to name Lefèvre as the forerunner.

Farel as builder, yes, and not merely the agitator. Two small productions of his, appearing in 1533 and 1534, gave French Protestantism its first important catechism of belief, its first liturgy, and its first form of church government. He was also the chief encourager of the production of the standard French Bible, that of Olivétan (1535), based on Lefèvre. For twenty-seven years he served as faithful pastor at Neuchâtel, a fact that certainly serves as a significant corrective of our earlier picture of Farel the roving and roaring agitator.

From Neuchâtel his influence and his zeal range far and wide. That French speaking Switzerland became so powerfully Protestant is especially due to him. Let me quote from an important French compilation on the life and work of Farel (1930): "Alongside the political action of the people of Berne, the role of Farel was also of the first importance in the religious transformation of the Romanized country." This book tells us how, successively at Basel, Strasbourg, Lausanne, Neuchâtel, and then Geneva, he aimed to "create a foyer of action upon France."

This man of Dauphine, who remained always French at heart, did he not work, as Berne's agent, to attach to the thirteen cantons lands which up to that time had belonged to Savoy or Franche-Comté? Was it not the Reform, which he was the first to preach in those territories, was it not the Reform more than anything else that separated the Romanized countries of Savoy and France in order to link them to their new destiny? Thus the man who subordinated all political action to his religious aim is discovered to have worked, for his little part, in the making of modern Switzerland. (Guillaume, *Farel*, 1930. Pp. 11-13.)

A major technique of Farel in this bold strategy was the challenge to debate. As often as not the champions of the old church would fail to appear, and the victory would go by default to the Reformed cause. The priests and monks seemed helpless before him because they did not know their Bible. Farel was not slow to press every advantage and to twist the political turmoil of the time and place to the furtherance of the Reformed cause. He was always pressing the issue, "Where do you stand?"

Though Neuchâtel became his chief seat of life and work, we must recall here his earlier relationship to Geneva, familiar as it is to all Calvin students. Farel did the main job of guiding the city from its decaying Catholic phase towards its decisive vote for the Reform.

The full legal acceptance of the Reformation in Geneva [I quote from D. H. MacVickar's Union Seminary thesis on *Farel*, 1954] took place in the plebiscite held on May 21st, 1536, when the citizens voted without dissent their "desire to live in this holy evangelical law and Word of God, as it has been announced to us, desiring to abandon all masses, images, idols, and all that which may pertain thereto" (*Les Registres du Conseil de Genève*, May 19, 1536).

When the patient labor of education and constructive spiritual building was necessary, Farel felt himself unequal to the demands. But he knew the right man. By an accident of war which blocked the French roads, John Calvin found himself passing through Geneva on his way to Strasbourg. There ensued one of the ever memorable small scenes of Reformation history, the scene in which Farel told Calvin that God had pointed his way to Geneva for a particular reason. Calvin was a retiring, somewhat self-distrusting man of books who naturally shrank away from the very thought of the responsibility Farel would thrust upon him. One is reminded of Jeremiah quailing before God's call. When Calvin gave a weak answer, Farel flushed with sudden passion, stood up, and, to quote Calvin's own words,

besought God to curse my retirement and the tranquillity of my studies if I should withdraw and refuse to give assistance when it was so necessary. This imprecation so terrified and staggered me that I desisted from the journey I had undertaken . . . as if God from on high had laid his hand on me to arrest me. (*Calvini Opera quae supersunt omnia*, XXXI, p. 26.)

It was a remarkable collaboration that these two so dissimilar men enjoyed in laying the foundations of Geneva's singular role in that whole proportion of the Protestant world we name Reformed, in distinction from Lutheran. The two men had frequent reasons

to differ, but they realized an essential unanimity on the great issues. It will be recalled that Genevan circumstances soon went against the two Reformers, that they were thrown out, and that within three years the political mentors of the place begged Calvin to return. We say Calvin, because henceforth this brilliant theologian of God's sovereignty, as Farel transferred his own labors to Neuchâtel, became spiritual king of Geneva. Calvin was reluctant to leave his pleasant haven at Strasbourg to return to the city which had so rudely expelled him. But Farel again stormed and cornered his friend for a favorable verdict. Calvin went back, re-enforced by his association with Strasbourg and Martin Bucer, not only to make Geneva great, but also to give the whole Reformed and Presbyterian world a body and a soul. We do not forget, finally, the importance of William Farel in all this history.

Farel outlived the sickly younger man by a year. As a man of sixty-nine he had, by the way, got himself a wife. It was a marriage which Calvin had strenuously disapproved, although the disagreement did not wreck their friendship. The union proved a happy one, and Farel even begot a son. The last letter the great Geneva leader ever wrote was written to William Farel and begins, "Farewell, best and truest brother."

This is not the occasion for drawing out further contrasts of our three principals, Lefèvre, Roussel, and Farel, the three Frenchmen we first met in exile at Strasbourg. We discern dedication and courage and memorable distinction in each of them. The times were frightfully confusing, and we would add a measure of charity to our portraits of the two men who failed to make the clean break with the ecclesiastical past. We still claim them as pioneers of French Protestantism. Roussel was obviously Lefèvre's close disciple to the end. It is possible that Lefèvre may have come to recognize that Farel, too, was a true spiritual son. Jacques Sturm, the fine Protestant mayor of Strasbourg, had gone to school to the well-known humanist, Wimpheling. The teacher became troubled by his pupil's heretical tendencies, and he wrote to tell him so. Sturm sent back the answer that other men have given in similar circumstances: "Dear master, if I have become a heretic, it is to you that I owe the fact." Farel never lost his reverence for Jacques Lefèvre and his sense of great gratitude to him.

Let us believe that in heaven the three have happy communion, as once in the quest at St. Germain-des-Pres and on the streets and in the homes and churches of Strasbourg. Singing glory to God and hearkening to the Word, they had been one. Unfortunately, on earth the Lord does not often grant such joyful union of his children for very long. Here, in the heat and the dust, a man must take sides.